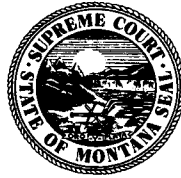


**The Supreme Court of Montana**  
**Office of Court Administrator**

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**TO:** Members of the Legislative Finance Committee  
David Ewer, Director, Office of Budget and Program Planning

**FROM:** Lois Menzies, Court Administrator  
Montana Supreme Court

**DATE:** February 24, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Budget Reductions

In January, the budget director asked the Judicial Branch to consider submitting a plan for voluntary budget reductions during the FY 2011 biennium. In response, we have conducted a thorough review of our budget in an effort to identify potential areas for cost savings that would not significantly impede the ability of Montana courts to meet their constitutional and statutory mandates. This exercise was challenging because the Branch has already implemented a series of measures to stay within our current budget.

The following list of proposed reductions has been reviewed by the District Court Council and approved by the Supreme Court. Please note that some of these reductions would require action by the 2011 Legislature.

Proposal	FY 2010	FY 2011	Description
Reduce general operating expenses	\$2,113	\$82,410	Reductions would be made in several areas such as judicial training, fixed costs, and cellular devices.
Reduce IT equipment purchases	X	\$150,000	The Judicial Branch generally replaces about one-fourth of its computer equipment every year. This reduction would stretch the replacement cycle beyond four years.
Revert portion of IT long-range planning funds	X	\$340,000	In 2007, the Branch received \$3.9 million for various IT projects. This proposal would reduce the balance in the Branch's capital projects

Proposal	FY 2010	FY 2011	Description
			account by \$340,000, which would reduce funding available for courtroom technology upgrades. Legislative action would be needed to move these funds from capital projects account into the general fund.
Eliminate annual JDIP evaluation for FY 2011	X	\$25,000	The Office of Court Administrator annually receives \$25,000 from the juvenile placement budget to conduct an evaluation of placements, programs and services to youth on probation. This proposal would eliminate the evaluation for one year. A statutory change would be needed to suspend the evaluation for a year.
Revert Judicial Standards Commission restricted appropriation	X	\$20,000	The Branch received a \$22,762 biennial appropriation that can be used only for Judicial Standards Commission operations.
Department of Corrections (DOC) recommended reduction: Remove funds from parental contributions state special revenue account for deposit into general fund	X	\$600,000	Generally the money in this state special revenue account is generated from court-ordered contributions made by parents with children under juvenile probation supervision and is used to off-set the costs of juvenile out-of-home placements. This recommendation reduces funds that could be made available to Youth Courts to defray the costs of out-of-home placements of youth by juvenile probation.
DOC recommended reduction: Reduce juvenile placement budget	X	\$267,000	This recommendation reduces funds available for out-of-home placements, services, and programs for juveniles referred to Youth Court.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,113</b>	<b>\$1,484,410</b>	<b>BIENNIUM TOTAL: \$1,486,523</b>

Regarding the DOC recommended reduction to the juvenile placement budget, the Judicial Branch respectfully requests that this reduction be temporary in nature. If the reduction continues into the 2013 biennium and beyond, it will result in less funding being available for community-based intervention and prevention programs, which are used by the Youth Courts to prevent placement of youth outside their communities. If there are fewer options available within the community, the cost of out-of-home placements will increase significantly.

The Judicial Branch will continue to make diligent and reasonable efforts to reduce expenditures during this biennium. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.